

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EINV, EIND, EMIN, SL

SUBJECT: MINING MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON BETHSTEEL INTEREST IN DELCO

REF: FREETOWN 344

1. ACCORDING GOVT INFORMATION SERVICE (GIS) RELEASE, MINISTER MINES KAWUSU-KONTE, ADDRESSING WORK FORCE AT DELCO IRON ORE MINE AT MARAMPA MARCH 6, DENIED PREVALENT RUMOR AMONG WORK FORCE THAT BETHSTEEL "TAKING OVER DELCO". MINISTER QUOTED AS SAYING THAT BETHSTEEL HAD SUBMITTED PROPOSAL FOR TWO-YEAR JOINT MINING OPERATION WITH DELCO WHICH GOVT CONSIDERING. GIS RELEASE STATED MINISTER GAVE WORKERS A BRIEFING ON BETHSTEEL AND TOLD THEM BETHSTEEL WILL HELP IMPROVE IRON ORE MINING IN SL. MINISTER REPORTED HAS HAVING ASSURED WORKERS THEIR CONDITIONS OF SERVICE SECURE.

2. SIERRA RUTILE VICE PRESIDENT DAVID FRASER HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT CONTACT OF HIS AT MARAMPA WHO HEARD MINISTER'S TALK SAID KAWUSU-KONTE IN FACT WENT BEYOND WHAT REPORTED BY GIS TO STATE GOSL FAVORABLY INCLINED TOWARD BETHSTEEL PROPOSAL AND THAT HE EXPECTED SOMETHING WOULD BE WORKED OUT WITH BETHSTEEL.

3. COMMENT: MINISTER'S STATEMENT IS FIRST AND ENCOURAGING INDICATION OF FORTHCOMING GOSL REACTION TO BETHSTEEL PROPOSAL FOR OPTION PERIOD IN WHICH TO
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ASSESS FUTURE OF DELCO AND POSSIBILITY BETHSTEEL

TAKEOVER OF MINE WITH SUBSTANTIAL SUBSEQUENT NEW
INVESTMENT (REFTEL). GOSL KNOWN BE ANXIOUS KEEP MINE
(AND ITS 3000 JOBS) GOING IN FACE OF UK-BASED WILLIAM
BAIRD GROUP DESIRE TO PULL OUT. SPECIAL ADDITIONAL
FACTOR IN GOSL INTEREST IS THAT PRESIDENT STEVENS WAS
EMPLOYED AT DELCO FOR MANY YEARS AND HAS PERSONAL
EMOTIONAL INTEREST IN CONTINUATION OF MINING OPERATIONS.
SAMUELS

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